

POSTPRINT

Communicative involvement in public discourse

Considerations on an ethnographic inventory and a proposal for the analysis of modes of citizenship¹

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Introduction

Participation in public decision making procedures is administratively regulated: Usually, there are some fixed positions which have to be filled and proceeding steps which have to be carried out. These administrative regulations correspond to the political guidelines of the respective country (cf. Bora, this volume). In the European Union, therefore, exist several and partly very different conceptions of participation in different countries. Differences are made in regard to, for instance, the participation of externals that means persons or institutions, as for example GREENPEACE or the German BUND, which do not belong to the definite circle of participants via office, via filling a claim, or via competence as an expert, and so on.

But, for an open society, it is important not only to regulate participation in decision making procedures in an administratively governed way, but also to take into account the interests of the citizens at all. Therefore, an interaction analytic investigation of different ways of participation in public discourses may help to grasp modes of participation and the claims involved – and to grasp also the claims which are rejected by officials, and the reasons why they are rejected. With that, a set of possible and useful modes of citizenship in decision making procedures could be developed.

After all, such modes of participation are of special interest which are not at all admitted officially in the formal public procedures, and which are often rejected or stopped by the head of a decision making procedure (e.g. modes of paternal or ethical participation); or an investigation of informal meetings of persons engaged in the context of such procedures has to be run – that means we have to analyse the

overall public discourse which is established by such a decision making procedure. With that, modes of participation become obvious, which can not be perceived by surveying only the administrative part of a decision making procedure. Therefore, a far-reaching inventory of the public participation modes not only of the official participants of decision making procedures is important.

In the following, I will firstly sketch out an ethnographic approach to modes of citizenship. Then, I present the interaction analytic conception of interactional profiles which I try to apply (and enlarge) methodologically in order to typify modes of citizenship. After that, I characterise some persons in the local public meeting documented in the annex in order to illustrate that approach, and then I will characterise some general discourse profiles on the basis of my research experience in other social and political fields of settlement and release procedures. Finally, I will give a synopsis of tasks which in my opinion are important and necessary in order to define modes of citizenship. I will begin with a personal review of my own experience in different fields of research.

Ethnographic investigation of the field of discourse

The investigation of "Communicating Citizenship in Decision Making Procedures" is a methodological challenge for an interaction analytic approach. And "Communicative Involvement in Public Discourses" – as the title of this paper suggests – is just a small piece of a big puzzle in a scenario of the different modes of citizenship.

During the examination of communicative involvement of the participants in the meeting that served as database for the Conference on "Communicating Citizenship and Social Positioning in Decision Making Procedures" (see annex), I was confronted with many elements I have encountered in former and current research projects on different topics. As it is necessary in many fields of linguistic investigation of dialogues and discussions, it is not sufficient here to record such a meeting discussion and just to analyse the verbal and interactional phenomena therein. Something remains incomprehensible then or will be analysed incorrectly or even wrong. Therefore, it is necessary to run some ethnographic investigation to come to know the overall pragmatic context a conversation is embedded in (cf., for instance, the analysis of framing activities which started before the actual meeting took place, given by Furchner and Münte in this volume, or the analysis of typical procedural strategies run by experienced participants of decision making procedures²).

In order to explain the ethnographic approach paradigmatically, I will refer to some research experience of my own.³ In the past 20 years I have run a lot of

ethnographic investigation in several fields of interaction. Currently, I am working at the Institute for the German Language⁴ within a project entitled “Communicative styles of highest level executive persons”. In this project, the communicative behaviour of the societal elite, the executive persons of institutions in politics, economics, science and administration is examined.⁵ Embedded in the framework of a more general investigation of the communicative social styles in Germany,⁶ we try to define the communicative behaviour of the elite as a particular communicative style. A general assumption thereby is that communicative styles are relevant and meaningful for the social identities of the members of a society, and that they reflect the specific conditions of the respective social worlds.⁷ With that, we also investigate processes of integration, differentiation, distance-leveling and exclusion in the German society. Now, in order to determine relevant and salient situations of communication of the elite, an ethnographic investigation is necessary and unavoidable.⁸ We try to understand the communicative network and the several types of interactions by analysing the media, by participant observation, by analyses of calendars and documents, and by interviews.

In former research on mediation talk, I have tried to understand the societal context, wherein such talk occurs, and its embedding in the overall interrelations of conflict development and institutional procedures.⁹ In similar ways, I have investigated talks in the field of medical communication.¹⁰ And I have investigated – as a field of discourse very near to the field of the working group PARADYS – an ecological political discourse on the settlement of an incinerating plant.¹¹ Such a public discourse unfolds in vast and very different activities, and with a mass of participants. E.g., besides the official announcements and meetings, there are lots of encounters, reports in newspapers or other mass media, or often series of letters to the editors in newspapers; or besides the official participants, there are scientific, technical or juridical experts from outside to be found in decision making procedures, or even persons from all over just worried about the case. Relevant features of both, activities and participants have then to be grasped if you want to be able to analyse the interesting data in an adequate way.

Therefore, an ethnographic approach seems helpful and even necessary for the question at issue, the question of citizenship in decision making procedures. Both, the societal positions which are represented in such a technological discourse, and the ones that should be possible and useful for the society and its self-understanding to carry it out, have to be found out. And a small element of that ethnographic investigation could and should be the analysis of emerging profiles of topical and social positioning by means of the analyses of communicative involvement – referring to the entire discourse, but also to single interactions of the entire discourse as for example informal public meetings. Communicative involvement here means the specific way persons or groups of persons (as e.g. an

action group) act in the course of a decision making procedure, and with what kind of social membership categories they try to gain attention and claim for participation, etc. The different kinds of communicative involvement of single persons or groups of persons can be paradigmatically interpreted then as several possible modes of citizenship – with an open list of such modes.

Now, how is the ethnographic investigation of participation in the field of genetic engineering to be carried on according to these outlined methodological considerations? The first step should be a systematic collection of salient documents and communicative events in local and overall discourses about the regulation of “green” genetic technology. Then, information about political and administrative guidelines for the release of genetically manipulated plants has to be gathered. And the media has to be monitored in search of reports, portraits, and even chains of letters to the editors. And you have to gather the personnel of such a discourse, measured out in terms of obligation, optionality, and even contingency, and also marked off in terms of involvement and distance to the discourse. Further, you have to find out the prototypical activities of the personnel, their participation as officials, as protagonists, and antagonists. Activities of citizens e.g. may be the foundation of an action group to obtain more professional technical and juridical expertise, or political support. Another important element of the ethnographic investigation is the recording of several kinds of discussions, e.g. public discussions, interactions as part of administrative procedures, or private conversations, and self-initiated interviews with engaged persons.

For reason of an economic research process, the analysis of the data has to focus only on the question of citizenship. This analysis can be carried out along with the ethnographic investigation; it is not necessarily bound to sequential order. The purpose there is to collect topical and social positions in all the data and to typify them even in the written administrative regulations of decision making procedures (for example if there are formulations like “the chairman has to ...”, or “the applicant should ...”, or “the opponents may ...”). Indications of potential modes of citizenship can be found even *ex negativo* when, for example, the chairman of the official hearing about the atomic reprocessing plant in Wackersdorf (West Germany) said: “Questions concerning the sense, the morality, or ethics cannot be treated here according to the juridical rules of these proceedings!”¹²

Communicative involvement and interactional profiles – Expansions of an analytic conception

The several elements and aspects outlined here allow identifying what I call interactional profiles (Spranz-Fogasy 1997). The idea of interactional profiles was

originally conceptualized to grasp the individual interactional behaviour of single persons, but it is expandable to the analysis of institutions, and to topical and social positioning too. In the following, I will explain this in a more general way. With the analytic conception of interactional profiles outlined in Spranz-Fogasy 1997, I try to depict the *emergence* of interactional individuality in entire conversations. The conception of interactional profiles is oriented towards general interactional demands and the particular ways, interactants deal with them as for example with turn-taking, with the organization of verbal activities, the organization of content, or the organization of relationships. The focus then is threefold:

1. to look at the respective focused participants and how they run their interactional tasks,
2. to look at their partners and how they act in relation to the activities of the person in focus, and
3. to look at the interactional process itself and how this process progresses, stabilizes itself, changes and dissolves

– all these aspects coincide in the emergence of an interactional social type. The intention of the analytic conception of interactional profiles therefore is to characterise the emergent coherence of a communicative “gestalt”, constituted by the activities of one focused participant, his partners and the dynamics of the interactional progress.

In a typifying way, the structuring processes of this emergence can be understood with the help of a three-step-model:

1. *Accumulation* of recurrent and coherent activities of the participants during the conversation,
2. *Condensation* of these activities, especially at particular points of a conversation which go along with the condensation of the central tasks or a change of such tasks, and then,
3. the activities get particular *dynamics*, the participants may hardly evade.

Influencing and stabilizing factors of these processes are threefold, too:

1. *Consistency and persistence* of the activities of the focus person,
2. *Control* of the interaction process by the partners, and
3. *Objectivation* by the progressing interaction itself.

For illustration purposes, I will sketch the case of a so-called “troublemaker”: In a TV discussion one of the participants often intervenes, he becomes involved in uncontrollable courses of exchange, and he is systematically involved by others. He is explicitly criticised by his partners for that, and all of this produces mutual

negative dynamics. It is the coincidence of the participants' work and the reinforcing manifestation via the progress of the interaction which together produce a troublemaker who finally is a troublemaker. Even when he tries to escape from this interactional profile by exercising restraint, his partners keep him down by explicit remarks and by keeping in force the negative conditions when he tries to join in again.

Now, for the question at issue concerning citizenship in decision making procedures, some expansions of this conception of interactional profiles are necessary: Firstly, looking for modes of participation, we do not deal with individuality or individual types of interactional behaviour – but, modes of participation can not be analysed without measuring out individual types of interactional behaviour. Secondly, we do not look for general types of interactional behaviour but for a particular one in the context of a particular social discourse, the discourse on “green” genetic technology. And, finally, we do not deal with actors in one single interaction as for example in one public meeting, but we have to deal with actors, individuals and institutions, which act in many communicative events in the context of a long stretched public discourse. These actors write protest papers or letters to the editors, they get expertise themselves or they acquire experts from outside, they found an action group and so on. All of these activities of communicative involvement can be seen as elements of a typical profile of participation in such a discourse, out of which indications for modes of citizenship may be detected by comparing and contrasting several participants and their several interactional profiles. The coherence of activities makes it possible to identify typical profiles of the discourse-personnel, which can be interpreted as relevant modes of citizenship in decision making procedures.

For the investigation of single profiles in such a discourse, it is necessary to scan the ethnographic data of that field in search of formulations¹³ of participation demands which single persons, or action groups or institutions claim for themselves. We have to investigate in retrospect who first makes such claims, and at which occasion he did so. Then we have to follow the history of such claims and the persons who make them; we have to analyse the respective activities in detail, and the reactions of the other protagonists in the course of the discourse.

The analytic demands mentioned above sound like a huge request hardly to cope with. But in my experience, it is possible to deal with. A “gestalt” can be seen very soon, which gets contour in the framework of such a discourse, and often just during a single interactional event. But, to avoid misunderstandings, these profiles are *not* the requested modes of citizenship at all. They are typified participation roles from which such modes of citizenship hopefully may be derived.

Approximations to discourse profiles in a meeting on the release of genetically manipulated plants

In the following I will roughly present a few interactional profiles of individual persons with reference to the transcript documented in the annex. By comparing the data with other data of my own, I want to demonstrate that such profiles are regularly to be found in comparable discourse fields as for example in discussions about nuclear energy, about the settlement of incineration plants, or about electromagnetism caused by mobile phone technology. Therefore the investigation of citizenship is obviously an important issue for modern societies.

Firstly, I want to focus on the speaker who is described as a “professor” (called “PROF” in the transcription) and as an expert in genetic manipulation; he starts off with his statement in line 532.¹⁴ Such a person always will be found in decision making procedures in the role of an opponent to applicants and administration. He is thematically engaged but stylizes himself intentionally as a well-informed citizen driven by his expertise to a high emotionalized involvement – but therefore necessarily far from the part of a distanced and objective expert.

The moderator (“MOD”) asks him to “tell us something . yes, about scientific background” (529–531) but the professor rejects this request immediately:

- (1) well . that’s not what I wish to do ahm because I believe that . ahm this subject suffers a lot from the fact that it has been turned into a subject for experts for so called knowledgeable people . as it directly affects us all (532–537)

In his statement, he often refers explicitly to scientific and political experts (e.g. to Erwin Chargaff, a famous critic of the sciences (558), or to the minister of agriculture at that time, Karl-Heinz Funke (800)). He demonstrates his encyclopedic knowledge by quoting chemical, biological, or physical findings, by quoting juridical laws, or by mentioning similar events as the one in discussion. He often refers to his enormous experience of life e.g. as a participant in World War II, as an apiarist, or as a professional activist in the Third World. And he refers to his own activities and engagements in other fields of political debates, e.g. the discussion of nuclear energy, where he was engaged in an admonitional watch (e.g. 576) and the “Friesenheimer Erklärung” (e.g. 639) where he was one of the initiators.

His speech is eloquent and his argumentation is very sophisticated, and he often plays with words e.g. saying: European law breaks national law (1145) or pointing out: not the risk is the real problem but the success of this technology (1103).

He cannot and does not want to be objective, he interferes regularly, he intentionally ignores his communicative obligations and his partners’ rights, he postulates moral constraints and so on.¹⁵ His interactional profile is always estab-

lished not only by his own activities but by his partners too: Supporters of his party refer to and insist on his expertise competence, whereas his opponents accuse him of emotional overreaction, and try to disqualify him as it can be seen in the case of the troublemaker mentioned before. The interaction process itself produces its own objectivation concerning such a profile: Partners may refer to his several activities and to his topical comments, he will be presented in this manner in media reports and so on.

Another case is the female ecological farmer ("BIO", beginning in 109). She claims immediate and actual affection by the release of genetic manipulated rape what probably is real but questionable from a juridical and administrative point of view. She introduces herself personally and with reference to her farming cooperative. She describes that cooperative as a big ecologically working farm "where we grow vegetables . cereals and fodderplants for our animals" (112–114), and she exposes in detail and with the help of a map, which she brought along, that this farm is near to the fields where the release of genetic modified plants should take place. With that she instantiates herself as personally affected by the projected release. In her elaborate statement she then claims in an expertise manner that

- (2) in oilseed rape it has been established some years ago, and has also been confirmed again and again . that oilseed rape plants can easily pollinate other plants with their pollen, also wide into the surrounding area, simply because they really can fly thus far .. it isn't rare that two and a half kilometer are achieved, so that a cross pollination to other oilseed rape or to wild plants has been noticed (146–153)

She argues objective and sober, thereby conceding criticism by other participants of the actual meeting: "if I say something wrongly . please do feel free to correct me" (156–157). But also she friendly corrects statements of participants who are critics of the release too: "the plants don't contain any antibiotics or anything of that kind [...] a mis/ misunderstanding which can of cause very easily happen because this is a very complicated matter".

BIO is very eloquent, she is prepared with maps and overhead transparencies, and she refers in her statements to a global information network. During the discussion, she acts pertinent and competent; she interferes self-confidentially without ignoring her partners' communicative rights. Inversely, she is treated respectfully by her partners, even cautiously by her opponents because of her competence. She is not carried along by the interactional process, but she actively organizes it. You will find these profile in many public discourses too.

Speaker "P3" (a member of the local town office, beginning in 394), you will also find as a typical opponent in decision making procedures. He often intervenes in the discussions and accuses the invited speakers of self-contradiction ("this is

all very contradictory”, 397), of resignation (“then you have already given up”, 404), and of irresponsibility (“you can take the responsibility for all that? [] that’s because there isn’t any responsibility there, quite simply [...] The whole thing is absolutely irresponsible”, 1028–1035).

P3 is imperious, distrustful, and suspicious. And he utters dark prophecies (“then things will get worse [...] you will be living in serfdom again”, 520–522; “and then we won’t have any means anymore <EA> to then again take it all back again”, 1259–1260), or he wishes cataclysms (“I hope that such examples will sneek in everywhere that nature <EA> will hit back massively and that genetic engineering will show its whole absurdity”, 995–998). By doing so, P3 is little competent, as his insistence on mobile genes shows (980–985), where he assumes mobility in the area and not within the genome – what is meant here by other (expert) speakers.

Such a person wants and gets affirmation in meetings organized by critics, and is treated as obstructive in official meetings or other meetings organized by protagonists or by supporters of a settlement or release. In this mode, such a person aggravates the dynamics of an interaction, thereby sometimes growing to a leading person of the discourse; but often such a person gets the role of an outsider. P3 seems to get the role of an outsider here, as you can see e.g. in different activities of the moderator to stop her or him or to pass the turn to other discussants etc.

General examples concerning other decision making procedures

It is surely not the task here to define several modes of citizenship exactly but to sketch out ways to develop them at best, and to give some hints for methodical and methodological approaches. I just want to depict some communication characters from experience in other social fields in order to characterise paradigmatically some possible modes of citizenship. The leading question here is: What are the relevant dimensions for the investigation of modes of citizenship? Apart from the administratively given participation roles in decision making procedures, which necessarily are defined by immediate affectedness through a settlement plan or a release action, the following aspects are set relevant by activities of citizens, or by public interest. I will characterise them by – hopefully – self-evident expressions.

The first and most prominent type of participation refers to general and vague anxiety. I call it *prophecy of doom*. Although uncertain and lacking factual knowledge, the respective persons construct problematic correlations concerning several aspects of a settlement or a release procedure, and infer in the most fatal-

istic and suspicious way (an example for that may be P3 depicted in the section above). This kind of participation in public discussions is usually excluded by the representatives of the administration in decision making procedures, but it should in my opinion be taken into account. At first glance, it might sound ridiculous, but, as some leading managers of the energy and waste industry told me personally, this is the most serious aspect of resistance in such settlement procedures. They all state that the success of such procedures depends not on factual matters, but on the *communication* of the factual matters *to the public* because of such general and vague anxiety. I therefore plead for a very intense look at this dimension of participation.

Another type of participation is based on several social roles and is therefore multifold. I call it *citizenship-expertise*. In arguments with officials and the economic prosecutor of a settlement or a release procedure, they make a set of different social perspectives relevant for discussion as for example the role of doctors, of sociologists, of women, of parents, or – in representation – the role of children etc. In this way, they try to represent the society in parts and as a whole and base their claims on that representation (the above speaker BIO displays some features of that so-called citizenship-expertise). Administration and politics regularly refuse such kind of participation because they claim for themselves the sole representation of society. In this type of participation claim, a multitude of possible modes of citizenship may be detected.

A third type of participation – and this is different from the last type – deals with *common sense*. Representatives of this type do not refer to single social roles but to the citizenship as a whole. They argue against professional deformation of scientific experts and of persons in politics and administration, against juridical sophistry and similar things. (In parts the speaker PROF mentioned above claims such a role even though he is a scientific expert himself). This is an important participation issue, because lack of common sense – not meant in the sense of administrative categories here – makes people angry and reinforces their resistance.

And finally – perhaps not so important for the issue of citizenship here – I want to point out a specific communicative type of participation which I call the *devil's advocate*. Almost like a game-player, this kind of opponent of a settlement or a release procedure always tries to find counterarguments or blank areas in the presentations of others. Sometimes it may be really useful to exhaust all the relevant aspects with the help of such a discussant, but, more often, it leads to digression and blockades the procedure – possibly often intended by participants like that.

Some other modes of participation I have found in the different fields of deci-

sion making procedures but cannot be set out here. They are for example persons who present themselves as deprived of their rights or as powerless against the superior administration and economy. Both of them try to get support for their opposition with that kind of public appeal, often with the help of the media.

The rough characterization of some modes of participation presented here shows that it is useful to compare and to set in contrast data of the focused discourse about the release of genetically manipulated plants with data of other fields of public discourses as for example nuclear energy, waste incinerating, research with embryos and so on. Such comparison and contrast makes it easier to see the relevant features of the focused discourse and helps to determine the peculiarity of the own field of research. Concerning the economics of research, it is advantageous because typification of citizens' activities and institutional proceedings are already at hand in other fields of discourse. For example in 2001 we could observe intense activities and petrifications of civil opposition in Germany in the field of embryo research or euthanasia. Here, a regular look into the newspaper and other media surely releases a wealth of indications for modes of citizenship, whereas, within the political and administrative procedures, a participation of citizens is not provided for yet. In Germany, a so-called "ethics council" ("Ethikrat") has been established, whose members are experts of different scientific and political fields. Nevertheless, in public and media discussion, the involvement of citizens concerned about these topics is still enormous.

Final remarks: Proposals for the analysis of modes of citizenship

At the end of my paper and as a synopsis, I want to focus on the methodological and methodical aspects again. For one of the main questions of the PARADYS working group, the definition of modes of citizenship, the following tasks are the important and necessary ones:

- An ethnography of local and overall discourses where citizens are involved: That means a systematic recording of documents and communication events which are important and meaningful for the discourses themselves,
- analyses of documents and communication events of all kinds concerning topical and social positioning (as for example administrative guidelines and other administrative writings, media reports, letters to editors, leaflets, public discussions, public administrative procedures, informal meetings, etc.),
- with that a typification of positioning should come along,
- analyses of "interactional profiles" in an adapted conceptualization focused

on topical and social positioning and their processing as a kind of communicative involvement in discourses,

- comparison and contrast with materials of other fields of discourses (as e.g. nuclear energy, waste incinerating, embryonic research and so on),
- derivation and development of a spectrum of possible modes of citizenship in decision-making-procedures,
- definition of social fields of discourses where the participation of citizens is necessary or makes sense, and
- development of a conceptualization of citizenship in public matters of scientific and technological advances, respectively matters of technological application.

Notes

1. The following is a revised version of my paper given at the Conference on “Communicating Citizenship and Social Positioning in Decision Making Procedures” in Bielefeld 2001 (see foreword). For the help with the English I wish to thank Ralf Knöbl.
2. E.g. in a committee meeting a vote concerning the treatment of a proposal for a motion often does not really mean a vote concerning the treatment itself but is meant as an information about the probable result of a vote about the motion – with that information one party is able to provide precautions to avoid to be defeated at the vote.
3. Cf. for an overview Deppermann 2000 and Spranz-Fogasy and Deppermann 2001.
4. Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Mannheim, West Germany.
5. Cf. Spranz-Fogasy 2002 and Spranz-Fogasy 2003, Kallmeyer and Spranz-Fogasy 2002.
6. Within this general investigation several dimensions of society are examined, as e.g. generational talk, working place conversation, intercultural talk or media language. Cf. Keim 2001a,b,c, 2002 and 2005, Schmitt 2002, Schmitt, Brandau and Heidtmann 1999, Schmitt and Heidtmann 2002. The concept of communicative social styles is explained in Keim and Schütte 2002.
7. For the concept of social worlds cf. Schütze 2002.
8. There are very different understandings of “ethnography” in the social sciences (for a detailed discussion cf. Atkinson and Hammersley 1994, Duranti 1997, Gumperz 1982, Hanks 1996, Hughes 1992, Hymes 1972, Saville-Troike 1989; for the discussion in Germany cf. Deppermann 2000, Spranz-Fogasy and Deppermann 2001). The conception here follows Deppermann 2000, where he defines as aim of ethnography that the researcher gains a wide insight into facts and situations of a social field. Ethnography therefore has a holistic claim, i.e. the culture of a social field should be understood entirely in its relevant structures, processes and its interrelations (Deppermann 2000:104).
9. Cf. Spranz-Fogasy 1986 and Nothdurft and Spranz-Fogasy 1991.
10. E.g. Spranz-Fogasy 1987, 1988 and 1990.
11. Cf. Spranz-Fogasy 1992 and 1993.

12. Quoted from the film "RESTRISIKO oder die Arroganz der Macht" from Bertram Verhaag and Claus Strigel (1989).
13. 'Formulation' is a conversation analytic concept which refers to explicit statements on the own communicative activities, participants in conversations are running e.g. "I am saying that ..." (Heritage and Watson 1979). The concept may be enlarged here to statements of the own role in an interaction, or to formulations of personal points of view, etc.
14. See appendix for the German original and for the context of the fragments cited in the text. Numbers refer to the lines of the German original and the English translation in the appendix.
15. Remind the two famous scientific experts and critics of civilization, Erwin Chargaff and Robert G. Jungk, who often acted in a similar way as PROF does here.

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